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THE FIRST SEASON'S WORK OF THE AMERICAN SCHOOL IN FRANCE FOR PREHISTORIC STUDIES

By GEORGE GRANT MacCURDY

THE first term of the American School in France for Prehistoric Studies opened at La Quina in Charente on July 2, 1921, and closed at Gargas in Hautes-Pyrénées on September 27th. During this period a small group of American students took advantage of an opportunity to obtain a first-hand acquaintance with palaeolithic sites and with methods of prehistoric research. Nine weeks were spent at La Quina as a base station.

The principal station and the laboratory developed by Dr. Henri-Martin are now the property of the French Government. The students had free use of the laboratory. For eight weeks they dug in a station adjoining that of the Government, known as La Quina M and set aside for their special exploration (fig. 1, A-C; fig. 4, A). The specimens found included chipped flint implements of several varieties, oxide of manganese, showing scraped facets, utilized bone fragments, and many broken bones of the animals on which the Neandertal or Mousterian race fed. The principal animal remains found were, in the order of their abundance, *Bos primigenius*, bison, horse (two species), reindeer, stag, hyena, lion, fox, wolf, wild boar, and some *Capridae*. A part of each day was devoted to cleaning and studying the specimens found and identifying the animal species represented.

During several afternoons the School explored a small cave in the neighborhood and obtained specimens representing a culture horizon different from that of La Quina, namely the Magdalenian epoch. For two days they dug in another near-by cave known as the *Trou du Cluzeau*, which had been inhabited by Aurignacian man. There they found numerous fossil animal bones, many of which bore marks of the teeth of the hyena. The species determined include *Bos primigenius*, two species of

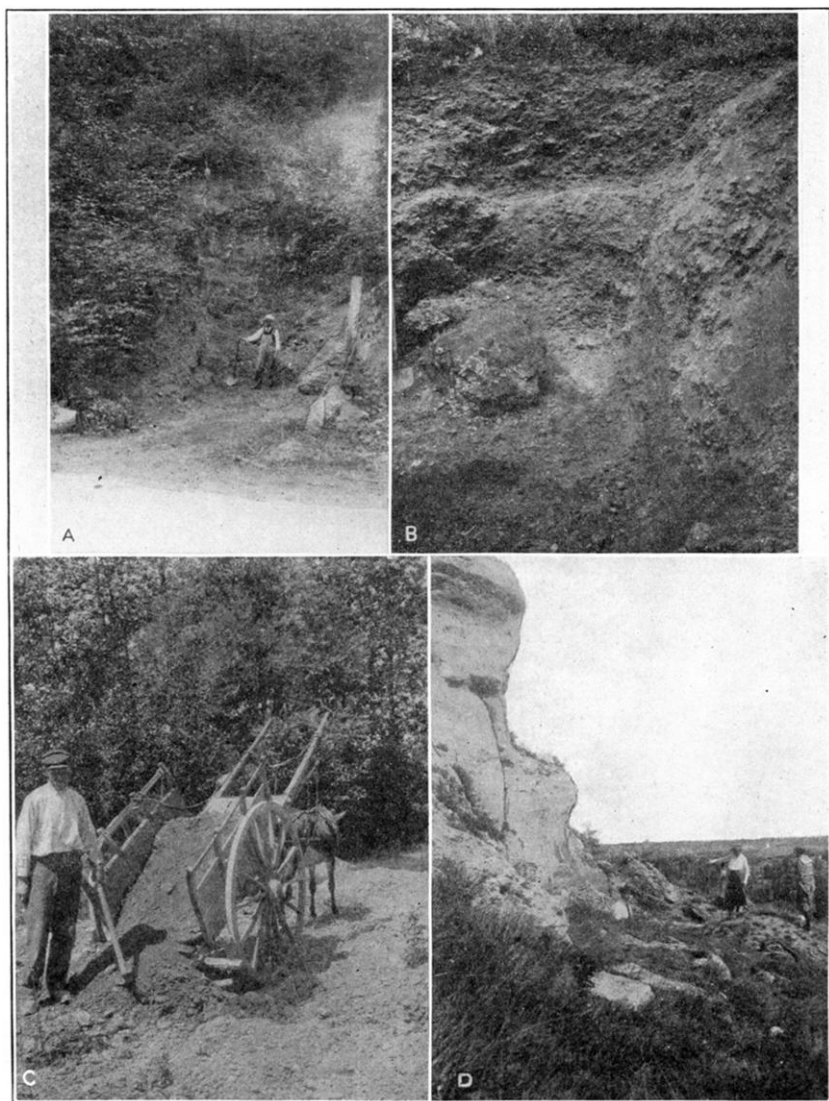


FIG. 1.—Explorations of the American School in France for Prehistoric Studies: A. La Quina M from the highway on July 4, 1921. The deposits to be removed are on the left. Photo by A. M. Pond. B. La Quina M on Sept. 9, 1921, taken at right angles to the preceding. Photo by MacCurdy. C. One of the 240 cartloads removed from the diggings and hauled 1 kilometer. Photo by MacCurdy. D. The station of Hauteroche near Châteauneuf (Charente). Photo by MacCurdy.

horse, lion, and hyena. Among the artifacts found were Aurignacian flint blades, a fine bone point, and a hunter's tally of bone (figs. 2 and 3).

The School took advantage of the many invitations of Dr. Martin to visit the Government Laboratory founded by him, and benefit by a comparative study of the collections therein. (fig. 4, B and C). They also had the stimulus occasioned by

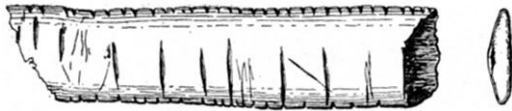


FIG. 2.—A hunter's bone tally found by the School at the Trou-du-Cluzeau (Charente). Aurignacian epoch. Natural size.

visits from persons interested in their work, notably Dr. Henri-Martin, Dr. Charles Peabody, Chairman of the Board, and Professor R. W. Wood of Johns Hopkins University, accompanied by his family.

From La Quina two excursions were made in the Dordogne, one to Teyjat for a view of the mural engravings on the walls of



FIG. 3.—Bone point found by the School at the Trou-du-Cluzeau (Charente). Aurignacian epoch. Natural size.

the cavern of La Mairie and one to Les Eyzies as a center for a week's stay. Les Eyzies has many attractions. The country is picturesque; much of prehistoric interest is set within narrow geographic limits but the chief point of interest is that nearly every cavern and rock shelter has become a gallery or museum in perpetuity. The galleries are the caverns and rock shelters with stationary or mural art such as Font-de-Gaume, Combarelles, La Mouthe, Bernifal, Cap-Blanc, La Grêze, the Abri du Poisson, and La Mairie (fig. 5, B). The museums are the stations in which specially prepared sections of the relic-bearing deposits are protected from ruthless hands as well as from the elements, and will

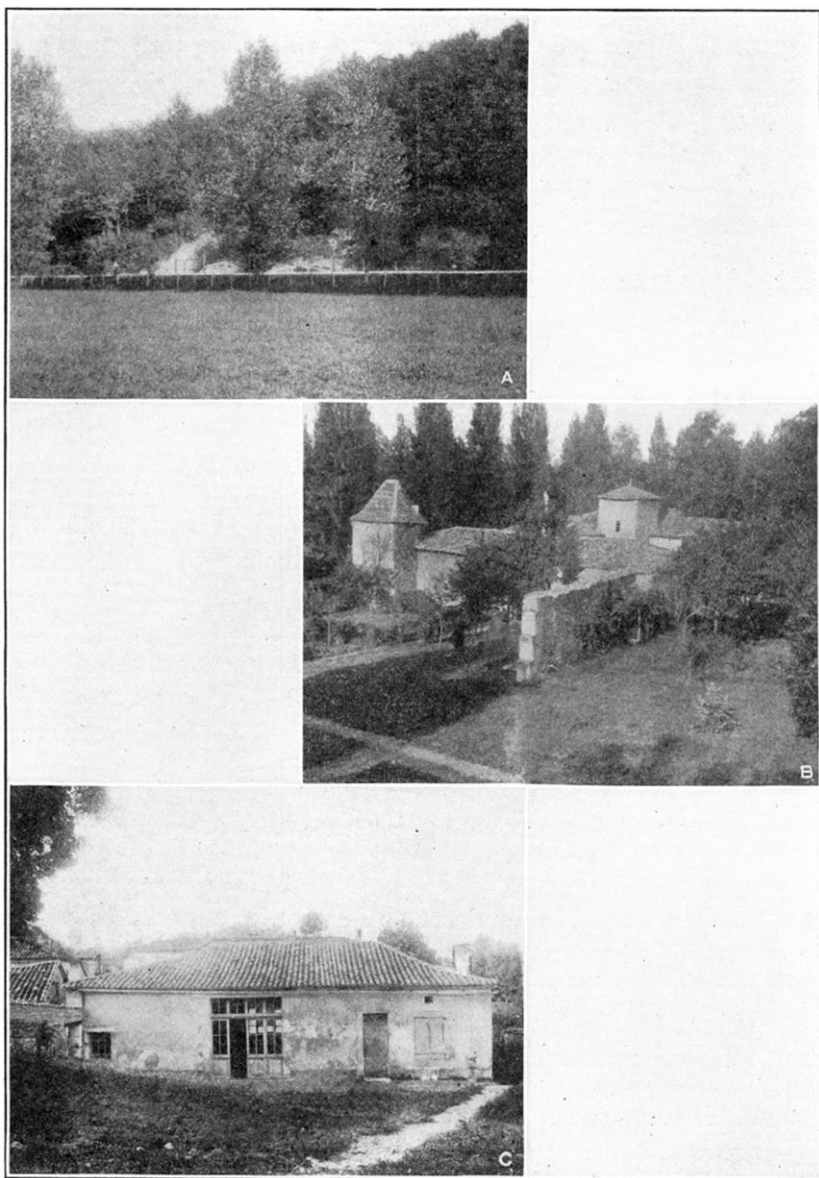


FIG. 4.—Explorations of the American School in France for Prehistoric Studies: A. The classic station, known as La Quina A, B, and C. La Quina M is immediately to the left. Photo by MacCurdy. B. The summer home of Dr. Henri-Martin at Peyrat near La Quina. Photo by MacCurdy. C. The laboratory founded by Dr. Henri-Martin and recently given by him to the French Government. Photo by MacCurdy.

ever remain to tell the story of how man lived and how long he lived before the dawn of history.

In two of the rock shelters, one finds not only an exposed section of the palaeolithic deposits exactly as they were originally laid down, but also a museum in the usual sense of the term—a building with cases full of specimens. These are the Abri du Château in the village of Les Eyzies (fig. 5, A), and Laugerie-Basse and Marseilles on the opposite bank of the Vézère River. Two of the most striking and instructive sections are to be seen at La Ferrassie and Le Moustier—the lower shelter where Hauser found a skeleton of the Neandertal race.

After returning to La Quina for a short campaign and shipping the specimens gathered to museums in the United States, the activities of the School were confined largely to visiting public and private collections as well as worth-while stations where work is either now in progress, or where sections or mural art still remain. While at Les Eyzies for example, we were present when L. Didon found an animal figure drawn in black on the face of a large fallen stone at the rock shelter of Labatut at Sergeac. We also crossed over into Lot and visited two palaeolithic caves with mural art recently discovered by the Abbé Lemozi, Marçenac and Ste.-Eulalie.

Before leaving Charente, the Director was elected to honorary membership in the Société Archéologique et Historique de la Charente. From Angoulême, the School visited the rock shelter of Hauteroche near Châteauneuf (fig. 1, D) and dug for an afternoon, finding a number of specimens. The following day they explored the sand and gravel pits of Carmagnac at Les Planes, where splendid sections of loess, sand, and gravel are exposed and where Acheulian and Aurignacian flint implements have been found (fig. 5, C). Several typical specimens were given to the Director by Monsieur Carmagnac, owner of the pits.

From Angoulême en route for the French Pyrénées, the School made several stops; at La Rochefoucauld to see the Fermond collection now in the possession of Dr. l'Homme, and a collection gathered during the present summer at a cave near Placard by Professor P. A. Ragout. With Professor Ragout, we

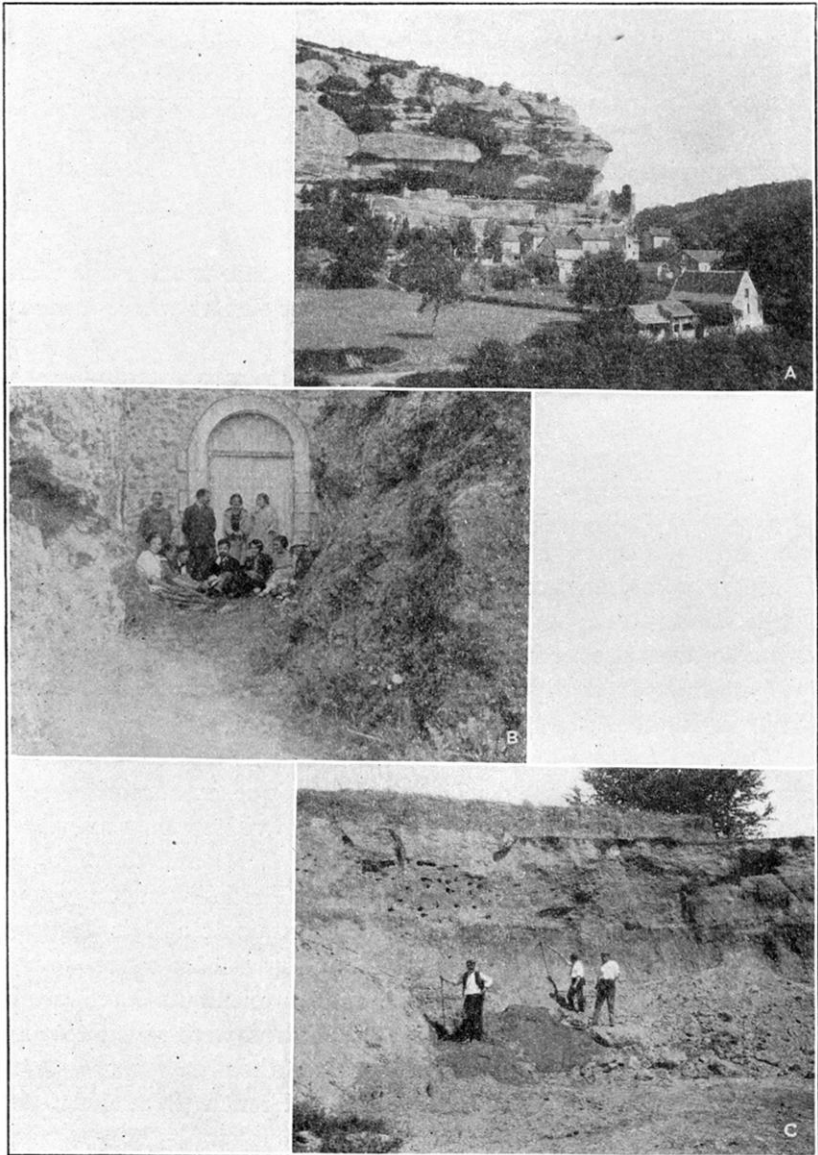


FIG. 5.—Explorations of the American School in France for Prehistoric Studies: A. The Abri du Château, Les Eyzies. The restored portion of the Chateau is now a museum. In the foreground is a portion of the village. Photo by MacCurdy. B. Entrance to the cave of La Mairie at Teyjat (Dordogne). Photo by MacCurdy. C. Sand pit of Carmagnac at Les Planes, near Angoulême. The relic-bearing levels are indicated by the two men with tools. Photo by MacCurdy.

later visited the cave where he has found a culture sequence representing the Aurignacian and Magdalenian epochs as well as the neolithic period and the bronze age. His finds also include an example of palaeolithic art—an engraving of one of the *Cervidae* on bone. We dug for awhile at the great cave of Placard and at the rock shelter of Bois-du-Roc in the immediate neighborhood.

Our next stop was at the Brive in Corrèze, where the Abbé Bardon was our guide. He showed us the local collections and with him we visited a series of palaeolithic stations a short distance from Brive: Grotte-des-Morts, Raysse, Coumba-del-Bouitou, Lacoste, Préaubert, Combe-à-Negre, the Grotte-de-Champs, and Bos-del-Ser (Bois-du-Soir). The Abbé Bardon is at present digging at Bos-del-Ser and we were permitted to dig with him for half a day, finding a series of Aurignacian flint implements. At Raysse, the Grotte-des-Morts, and the Grotte-de-Champs, we also found a few valuable specimens.

The trip from Brive to Toulouse was broken at Rocamadour and at Cahors. At Rocamadour, we met by appointment the Abbé Jean Bouyssonie and with him visited several local sites and the private collection of Armand Viré, Délégué du Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts pour les Monuments Préhistoriques et Historiques in the department of Lot. For a half day we dug with Viré at Crozo-de-Gentillo, which exhibits a culture sequence comprising the Aurignacian and Magdalenian epochs, as well as the Iron Age. Later, under the guidance of a local prehistoric archaeologist, Monsieur André Niederlander, we explored a neolithic dolmen and a tumulus.

The museum at Cahors proved to be well worth a visit because of the several palaeolithic collections it contains, notably those from Les Cambous, Cavart, Roussignol, and Coual.

Professor Emile Cartailhac,¹ dean of palaeolithic cave explorers, has made of Toulouse an important center of prehistoric research. The student in this field must needs see him and the collections he has formed at the Musée de St.-Remo and at the Natural History Museum. Moreover, Toulouse is a convenient point from which to make a tour of the palaeolithic stations in Haute-

¹ Since deceased. A memorial notice appears on page 113 of this issue.

Garonne, Ariège, and Hautes-Pyrénées. From Toulouse we went to Ussat and Niaux, both near Tarascon, where one finds the local forester whose presence is essential on the occasion of a visit to the cavern of Niaux. We also had the good fortune to meet Dr. Cuguillère, who showed us the Grotte-des-Églises at Ussat. Here Dr. Cuguillère recently discovered palaeolithic mural drawings, including the figure of a wild goat and a tectiform sign with a human figure lying beneath it, all three in red; also a bison in black. In one section of the cave, neolithic sepultures have been found. Only two weeks before our arrival Dr. Cuguillère discovered in the neighboring Grotte-de-l'Hermite a mural drawing in yellow ochre of a human form resembling the statue menhir figures, and hence presumably of neolithic age.

Niaux is a great and attractive cavern replete with human interest because of its having been a palaeolithic shrine. Numerous drawings in oxide of manganese, especially of the bison and horse, and signs both in red and black testify to this fact. There is also the realistic figure of a fish sketched in the fine clay of the cavern floor. At two points we stopped to pick up some neolithic potsherds that had been dug from the cavern floor. Across the valley of the Vic-de-Sos from Niaux is the Grotte-de-la-Vache which was inhabited during the Magdalenian and Azilian epochs. Engravings on bone have been found there, also Magdalenian harpoons of reindeer horn and Azilian harpoons of staghorn. The Garrigou collection from La Vache may be seen in the museum at Foix, which well repays a visit.

Between Foix and St. Giron (but not on the main road) lie two important caves, that of Portel with mural art and that of Mas-d'Azil. The principal treasures of Mas-d'Azil are now in museums, principally at St.-Germain-en-Laye. There are two stations: the one on the left bank, the type station for the Azilian epoch, is now but a memory since nothing remains but the site; the one on the right bank retains traces of mural drawings and engravings, including figures of the bison, reindeer, and horse. In the station on the right bank, many portable objects of art were found. Over the two stations and the Arise that flows between is a great natural arch of limestone 51 meters wide by 48 meters

high, beautiful to look upon, a roof that served to shelter man as early as the Magdalenian epoch, during the neolithic, bronze and iron ages, and even down to the period of the religious wars, and which is not yet in need of repair.

For sheer beauty of natural scenery as well as for the human interest attaching thereto, the two adjacent caves of Tuc-d'Audoubert and the Trois-Frères are pre-eminent. They are in the commune of Montesquieu-Avantes (Ariège) on the property now belonging to Count Bégouen, whose summer home, "Les Espas," is only about a kilometer from the caverns. These we conveniently visited from St. Girons, eight kilometers distant, after Count Bégouen had shown us the collections—artifacts of flint, bone, and reindeer horn, engravings and fossil animal bones—which he and his three sons, Max, Jacques, and Louis (the "Trois-Frères") had dug from the floors of the caverns.

The entrance to Tuc d'Audoubert which was discovered in July, 1912, is by means of a boat on a small subterranean stream (the Volp). In no other cavern inhabited by palaeolithic man are the stalactites and stalagmites so many and so beautiful. Of the series of galleries two are appropriately named: Salle Cartailhac and Salle des Noces. Seductive as these are, the smaller and plainer gallery of the bison (discovered in October, 1912) is even more attractive. The two bison figures modeled in clay on the cavern floor and almost completely in the round are in turn stupefying, bewildering, and admirable. This group represents perhaps more nearly than any other one thing the sum total of the cave man's mode of thought and life. Near this large group Count Bégouen found a small clay figure of a bison in the round. Being wholly detached from its matrix, this figure was removed and is now in the National Museum at Saint-Germain. Before leaving Tuc d'Audoubert, one will notice numerous palaeolithic footprints in the clay, also several superb engravings of various animal forms.

The cavern of Trois-Frères was discovered in July, 1914, through a pit opening therein from the summit of the hill. This pit had trapped many an unwary beast in Quaternary times, as witness the several almost complete skeletons of bison, reindeer,

etc., in the Bégouen collection at Les Espas. No wonder it had escaped for so long the keen eye of the modern explorer. Like Tuc, Trois-Frères is a series of galleries connected by corridors. Quaternary man had a more convenient way of entering these than by the overhead pit, probably by way of the Grotte d'Enlène, which Count Bégouen later found to be connected with the Trois Frères series, and which now serves as the entrance to the latter. If Tuc has its bisons in clay, Trois-Frères has its sorcerer, the most remarkable one of some hundreds of engravings which ornament the walls of the terminal gallery of the lower level.

The figure of the sorcerer, about 75 cm. in length, is situated high on the wall at one end and dominates the entire gallery. It is completely engraved, while the outlines of certain parts of the figure are further emphasized by the application of black paint. The figure is that of a man, masked and sporting a horse's tail. The body is in profile with the head turned full-face toward the observer. The sorcerer is in motion though little more than half erect. The legs and feet are typically human and from between the half-flexed legs the sexual organs are brought intentionally to view. The arms are passive and abbreviated. The mask is seen in the long hairy upright ears, above and between which rises a pair of stag antlers.

The bisons of Tuc, the sorcerer of Trois-Frères;

The one is a priest, the other a prayer.

Tuc and Trois-Frères were occupied by both Aurignacian and Magdalenian man and it is probable that the two were united in Quaternary times by a corridor. Portable objects of art were found both in Tuc and in Trois-Frères; and a beautifully carved dart-thrower was found by Count Bégouen years ago in the cave cf. Enlène, which is now used as an entrance to Trois-Frères. One should not visit these caverns, unless he is prepared to give at least a day to each.

The last two caverns visited by the School were Marsoulas in Ariège near Salies-du-Salat and Gargas in the commune of Montrejeau. Both are protected by iron gateways as the walls were decorated by palaeolithic artists. The principal figure at Marsoulas is that of a bison painted in red. At Gargas there

are many mural figures of the human hand—negative imprints in a red or black field. Many of these show the loss of one or several fingers. There are also mural figures of the bison, mammoth, and horse. The contents of the floor deposits prove that Gargas was inhabited by cave man for a long period of time, beginning with the Mousterian and ending with the upper Aurignacian epoch.

This sketch will serve to indicate the major activities of the School during the first term of the first year of its existence.. They were undertaken in the spirit of the pioneer, who has no precedents to break and none to observe. And if, perchance, some precedents have been established, the Director should be the first to acknowledge that he already is aware of many opportunities for improvement in the program of the second year. But suggestions along this line can best be embodied in a series of recommendations to his successor, rather than in a report of this kind. The second term's work in Paris and the third term in the field next spring are being planned to enable the students to explore the prehistoric fields not already covered by them.

PARIS, FRANCE.